

The construction of the railroad encountered many difficulties. At first construction was held back, because of inflated prices of materials caused by the Civil War. But despite difficulties, progress was made in the construction of the road. The first rail was laid at Omaha on July 10, 1865; ten miles of road were completed by September 22 of the same year; and on January 26, 1866, the Government made its first inspection, at which time thirty miles of road were completed and several miles more were made ready for ties and rails. Before the close of the year 1867 the road had been completed to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

The western portion of the road was built by the Central Pacific Railroad Company, a California corporation. Some of the men who were active in building this part of the road were Collis P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, Charles and Edward B. Crocker, Cornelius Cole, and Theodore D. Judah. Mr. Judah was chief engineer in charge of construction.

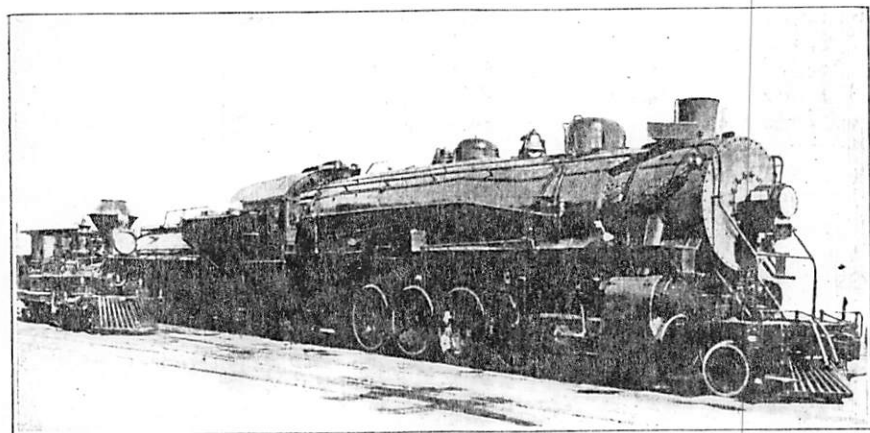


FIGURE 119—A comparison of the size of one of the first locomotives operating at the time of the completion of the transcontinental railroad and one of the modern locomotives. The little one is only thirty-two feet long, hardly as big as the tender of the big brother.

The intention was that the Union Pacific should build its road west to the western boundary of Nevada Territory and that the Central Pacific should build east from the Pacific Coast to the same point. By a supplementary act of Congress, approved July 3, 1866, by President Johnson, the Central Pacific was given authority to continue eastward until a junction was effected with the Union Pacific. The Union Pacific was also given authority to continue westward past the western boundary of Nevada, if a junction with the Central Pacific were not sooner made. Under this arrangement, each company exerted itself to complete its part of the road, and, if possible, to go beyond, as provided in the supplementary act of Congress.

Construction on the western part of the road began February 22, 1863, at Sacramento, California. The road was rapidly pushed eastward. A memorable construction event took place on April 28, 1869, along the slopes of the Promontory Mountains in Utah, when eight Irishmen and a group of other